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ABSTRACT

A rationale and model are presented for using literature to teach values clarification in elementary social studies classes. The premise is that a major goal of social studies is to develop good citizens, which requires a comparative knowledge of self and society, and decision-making ability. An explanation is given of how literature (including children's stories) provides the reader with a view of life on both personal and broader cultural levels. Literature usually deals with problems or issues and reflects the writer's values in terms of how the problems are resolved. An effective reading program should provide children with opportunities to link their reading experiences with their own lives and to allow feedback after reading through discussion. The authors present a model, utilizing literature, to help students clarify their own values as they relate to real-life situations. It is explained with an example of different conflict-resolution strategies presented in five different children's stories. The authors suggest ways in which teachers can guide children through analysis of the stories, clarification and comparison of their own and the characters' values, and reflection on the implications of various decisions. (AV)

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Developing Reading Ability by Using Literature for Values Clarification in Social Studies

March, 1982

by

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David Dillon and James B. Parsons

While general notions of the integration of the language arts with other aspects of the curriculum are widely held, we find that those notions can be intepreted and applied in practice in different ways. Our intention is to examine the basic nature of Social Studies and to show how literature for children can play a major role in that content area. By using literature specifically (and print generally) in this way, we submit that an appropriate environment can be created in a classroom for developing students' reading ability, i.e., their comprehension or understanding.

The Nature of Social Studies

While some very different views of social studies exist in the field, there is wide agreement that the major goal of a social studies program is to develop good citizens. No matter how good citizenship is defined, it seems obvious that it involves knowing one's culture and society and how one fits into it. More profoundly, this task involves seeking one's identity, trying to make sense of oneself and one's world, and looking for meaning in life. To deal with these tasks, one must discover (1) what the knowledge, beliefs, and values of one's social group are, (2) what one's own knowledge, beliefs, and values are, and (3) how those two sets compare with each other. In addition, since our society is democratic, good citizens must be committed to and able to actively participate in seeking solutions to personal and social problems.

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Thus, central to social studies is the process of making decisions - about personal and social problems. This process involves (1) gathering information about the problem, often called inquiry, and (2) more importantly, clarifying one's own values related to the problem. Value clarification is the more important of the two because any information we may have about a problem is weighed or colored in the light of our personal values. A good example of this situation would be two investors in the same financial situation and with the same information about a range of possible investments who make different decisions about how to invest their money because they hold different personal values related to the risk or safety of investing.

In short, data for decision-making are everything one knows about a problem or issue and one's reflections on it. In other words, decision-making involves (1) what one knows and (2) how one feels about it. Banks (1977) illustrates the two roots of decision-making in the chart in Figure 1. Hunt and Metcalf (1968) explain that this process not only leads to a decision, but actually serves to construct our knowledge and intelligence as we survey our background and the present environment for appropriate resources to bring to bear on a problem.

Finally, while our values are extremely important in our learning and decision-making, we often are not aware of them at a conscious level unless we have to apply these values to a particular social decision where values are in conflict or if we have other values with which to compare them. For example, many people claim they understand the values of their culture, government, education system, and so on, much better after living abroad for a while. Such an experience would allow comparison in the same way that one can compare the color of his or her walls to those on a paint chart from a hardware store and, by so doing, discover much more clearly what the color of one's walls really are. A "paint chart" for one's value system can be provided by literature.

Figure 1

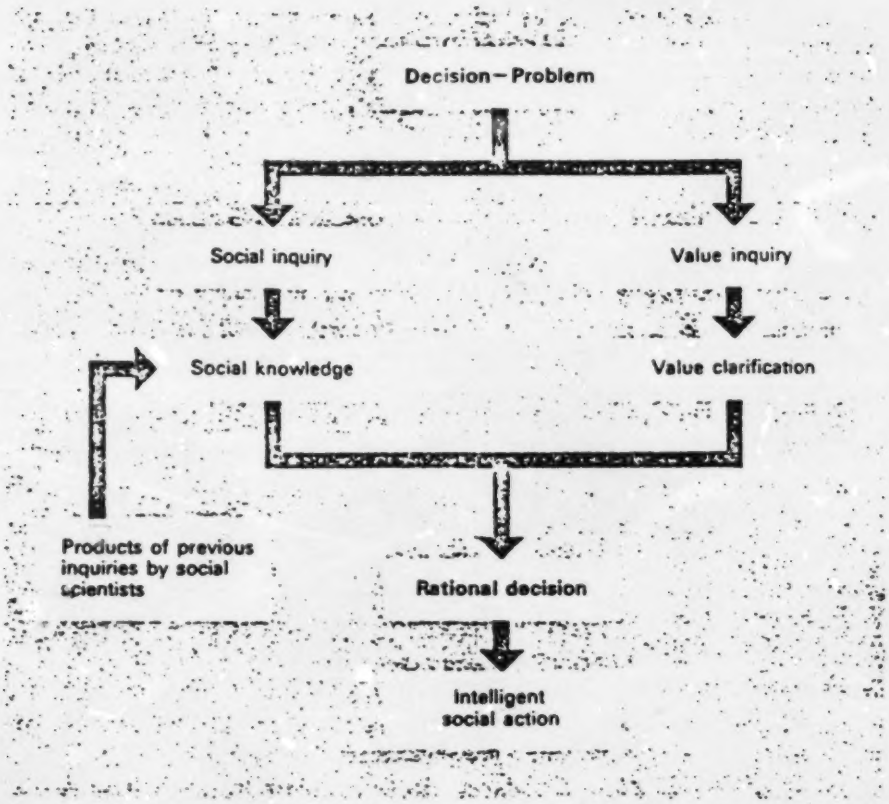


Fig. 1.3 A social studies curriculum focused on social inquiry, valuing, decision-making, and intelligent social action.

The Nature of Literature

Literature is far more than plot, characters, setting, genre, period, and so on, as many of us dealt with it in school. As a number of students of language use (Britton, 1970; Kinneavy, 1971; Halliday, 1973) point out, literary discourse is a particular kind of discourse that performs particular kinds of tasks for us, different from the tasks performed by other types of discourse. One of the major tasks it performs for us is to provide us with a view of life — through the conventions of literary art.

More specifically, Britton (1970) says that literary discourse makes us, not participants in life, but spectators of it. Atwood (1972) says:

> "A piece of art, as well as being a creation to be enjoyed, can also be (as Germain Warkentin suggests) a mirror. The reader looks at the mirror and sees not the writer but himself; and behind his own image in the foreground, a reflection of the world he lives in." (p. 15) (Italics ours)

Thus, one of our friends saw herself clearly in the main character of a particular novel and was able to say that, if someone wanted to know her better, he or she should read that novel. In this light, the reader can be viewed not only as a person but also as a citizen. To illustrate this point Atwood refers to the list Stephen Dedalus wrote inside the cover of one of his school texts in Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man .

> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> County Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe
> The World
> The Universe

This list includes any level or scope of life that it is possible to read about. While the first line refers to the personal level and the last line or two refers to a universal level (the two levels at which we usually discuss literature), all the middle categories refer to levels that could be called social, cultural, regional, or national. While different literature may emphasize different levels, it usually includes all levels. Thus Faulkner's works deal with the personal and universal levels, but they also supply us with a mirror in which we see aspects of the American South. In a similar fashion the stories of John Cheever provide us with insight to a suburban upper-middle class New England world.

When readers read literature, they often seek meaning in their own lives. From the text (mirror) they learn about themselves (personal and universal levels) and the world they live in (regional, culture, national levels). This type of analysis indicates how similar should be some of the general outcomes of a literature program and a social studies program and begins to indicate to us how the two can be integrated.

Several more specific similarities exist between the nature of social studies and literature. (1) One of the major ways that literature tells us about ourselves and the world in which we live is through the values reflected in it - values of the writer, of the writer's culture and nation. (2) Literature usually deals with a problem or issue. For example, Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath deals with the problem of social injustice and a children's book such as E.B. White's Charlotte's Web deals with the issues of death and friendship. (3) The problem or issue dealt with in the literature is viewed in a certain way by the author, i.e., the author makes a decision about it. This decision made is done on the basis of what the author knows about the issue (information) and how the author feels about it (values). These values can reflect the author as an individual, but also as an inhabitant of a region, a member of a cultural group, a citizen of a nation, and a member of the human race and, thus, holds up a mirror to us as human begins who belong to a particular culture and nation. This decision about an issue made by an author on the basis of his or her values is also called the theme of a story. For example, we can contrast the views (i.e., values) of Camus and Cervantes on life and death or the views of Sartre and the Romantics on love or the views of Anglo-Saxon and native North American cultures on the relationship between man and nature.

Social studies and literature have been explored in this paper, not as traditional subject matters, but as the growth of a person, what most of us

would agree education should be about. As Polyani (1959) puts it:

> I have shown how our subsidiary awareness of our body is extended to include a stick, when we feel our way by means of the stick. To use language in speech, reading, and writing is to extend our bodily equipment and become intelligent human beings. We may say that when we learn to use language, or a probe, or a tool, and thus make ourselves aware of these things as we are of our bodies, we interiorize these things and make ourselves dwell in them. Such extensions of ourselves develop new faculties in us; our whole education operates in this way; as each of us interiorizes our cultural heritage, he grows into a person seeing the world and sees life in terms of this outlook. (p. 10)

Frye (cited in Dillon, 1980) links literature with citizenship when he says:

> It is primarily by means of our imagination that we participate in society. That sort of participation makes us concerned citizens and, since a democracy depends on concerned citizens, it follows that the education of the imagination ought to have a central priority in our schools ...
>
> Literary education is not just a frill or a subject to be studied. It's the central part of what attaches an individual to his or her society ....
>
> If it [literature] is regarded in that sort of reduced light, then the whole conception of education has gone wrong from the beginning ... Until the absolute centrality of the literary operation in making a student an adult citizen is understood, I think that everything else has gone wrong. (pp. 201-206)

While literature can be encountered orally (as when someone reads it aloud to us) or visually (as when a book is made into a movie), we usually encounter it in print and must read it. As educators concerned primarily with developing students' reading ability, we must look finally at how reading fits into the perspective developed so far.

The Nature of Reading

To a large extent, reading has already been examined since it is just one mode in which the processes already described can take place. Research

and theorizing over the past few decades have provided us with a general picture of the reading process.

(1) Like any natural language process, reading is a tool which we use to learn about ourselves and the world around us, to establish and maintain social relationships, to get things done, and so on. Our purposes for reading influence how we make sense of what we read.

(2) What we comprehend depends on what we know. Only if we can relate something new to our existing understanding of the world, will it make sense. That is why all of us are unable to comprehend when we read about certain topics couched in certain language, e.g., income tax regulations for some, auto repair manuals for others.

(3) Our knowledge of the world and language causes us to expect much of what we will encounter in a passage (or in our daily lives, for that matter). That's why we can do clozure activities or predict what many of the newspaper stories will be about tomorrow morning.

(4) But where does looking at print fit in? Depending on how much background information we bring to reading a particular passage (which determines how much of the passage we can expect as we read through it), readers seem to use just enough of the print to confirm or revise their expectations. That's why we have to go very slowly and carefully through some passages (hard reading) and can breeze quickly through others (easy reading). That is also why the hard and easy passages aren't the same for everyone.

(5) Finally, we often gain additional insight about how we've made sense of a passage after the reading is finished if we discuss what we've read, encountered further information about it, and so on. For example, discussing a novel with a friend who has also read it can often clarify or adjust our comprehension of the author's message.

See Smith (1978) for a more detailed explanation of the reading process. In short, the "bottom line" in the reading process is the seeking of meaning or making sense. That meaning or sense is derived from much more than just the words on a page.

The implications for our helping students develop their ability to make sense as they read seem to boil down to (1) providing opportunities for students to link their reading experiences with their lives and their worlds, rather than assuming that students are learning about the characters and events in a story, (2) fostering the construction of meaning by students rather than assuming that students simply "take" meaning from the page, and (3) providing for feedback or use of the meaning after reading rather than assuming that all comprehension occurs only while looking at the words on the page. As Moffett and Wagner (1976) state, "What is needed for good comprehension are strong motivation before reading and strong intellectual stimulation afterward ..." (p. 124)

In regard to the reading of literature specifically, these implications mean, first, that literature can often be read by theme (problem or issue) rather than by topic or genre. The daughter of one of us came home from elementary school recently and announced, "We're doing fables now." It seems to us that she and her classmates could just as validly have been "doing" literature on friendship, or jealousy, or divided loyalties, or other personal or social issues. Secondly, treatment of literature should

allow students to go below the literal surface level to analyze the meaning implied between the lines and to compare and contrast the values embedded in the story with their own values. In other words, they need time to see themselves in the mirror provided by the literature. Finally, students should have opportunities to deal with the meaning gained from reading after the book is closed in order to extend, refine, and build meaning in common with other readers. This means engaging in discussion with others about the meaning, or message, of a passage; extending and transforming one's understanding of a passage through writing, art work, improvisational drama, and so on; and reflecting privately on how one's world compares to the world in the passage. As Wagner (1976) points out, "A reader who has discovered what words on a page [of literature] actually are - distilled human experience - has cracked the code forever." (p. 187)

The information presented thus far indicates the great similarities that exist among social studies, literature, and reading - aspects of the curriculum that are often dealt with separately. Figure 2 summarizes those similarities and the next section deals with the question of making specific application in the classroom of these general ideas.

Instructional Application

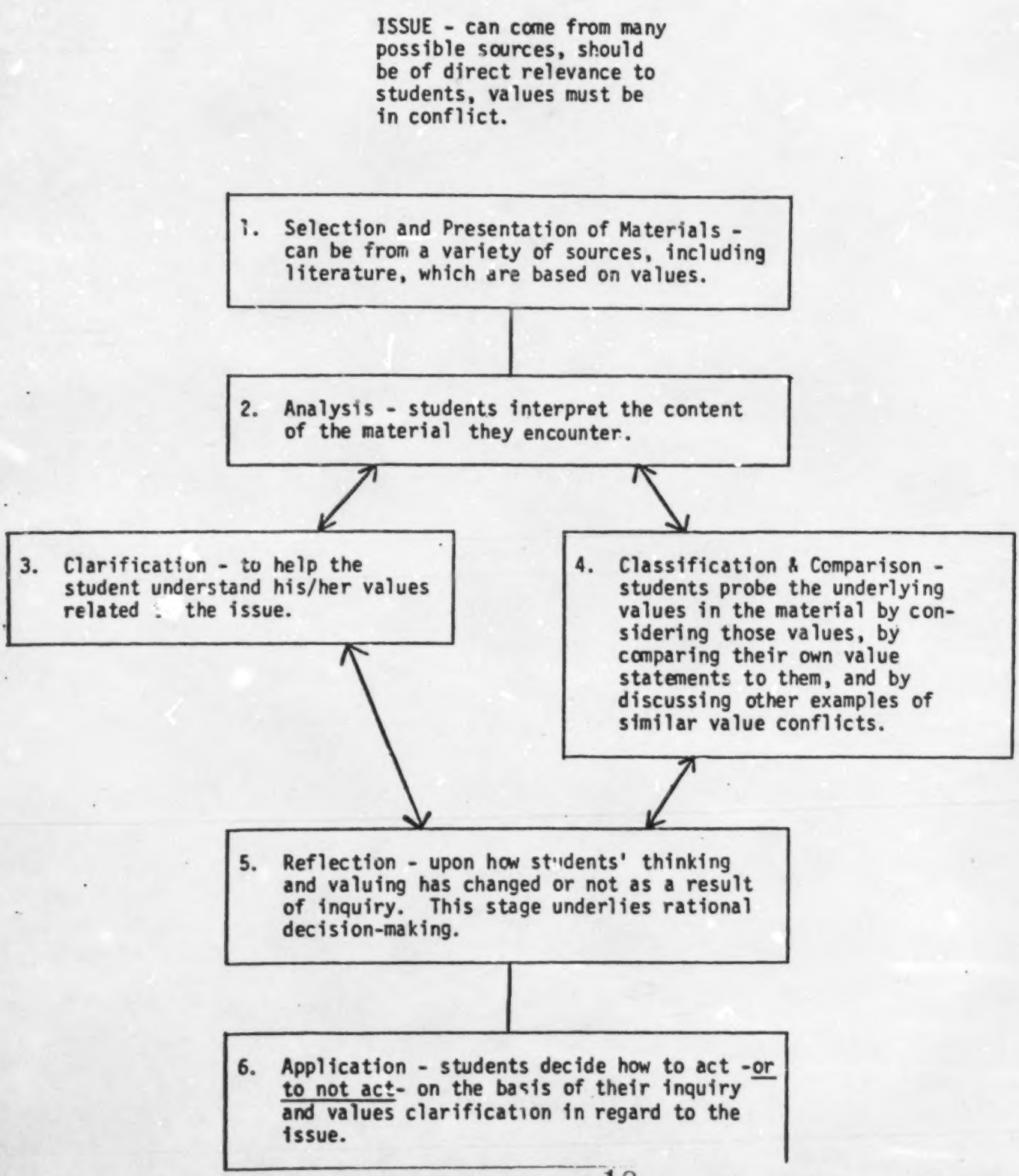
We felt that we needed to transform the general guidelines already described into a more definite instructional model. Since the reading of literature is being used to explore a social issue, it seemed that the work one of the authors had already done to devise an instructional model for dealing with social issues in the classroom would serve our purpose. (Sweeney and Parsons, 1975). That model is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 2

	Area: SOCIAL STUDIES	Material: LITERATURE	Mode: READING
1. A purposeful search for meaning (answer to question, solution to problem, decision, etc.) . . .			
2. in which each individual draws upon the total resources of his background (experiential and linguistic) . . .			
3. and samples those aspects of it which are necessary . . .			
4. for the individual to construct or make meaning for himself from the new data encountered . . .			
5. in an inductive, trial-and-error process actively structured by the learner.			
6. If the above happens, the individual discovers or learns something about himself and the world around him.			

Figure 3

Sweeney, Parsons Social Issues Model


ISSUE - can come from many possible sources, should be of direct relevance to students, values must be in conflict.
1. Selection and Presentation of Materials - can be from a variety of sources, including literature, which are based on values.
2. Analysis - students interpret the content of the material they encounter.
3. Clarification - to help the student understand his/her values related to the issue.
4. Classification & Comparison - students probe the underlying values in the material by considering those values, by comparing their own value statements to them, and by discussing other examples of similar value conflicts.
5. Reflection - upon how students' thinking and valuing has changed or not as a result of inquiry. This stage underlies rational decision-making.
6. Application - students decide how to act -or to not act- on the basis of their inquiry and values clarification in regard to the issue.

The model was developed as a tool to aid the development of students' decision-making. It is not meant to be followed rigidly as a recipe, but rather loosely as a guide. The arrows between parts 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the model indicate that these parts may merge together and/or that a group may move back and forth among them a number of times. To use the model as intended, the teacher must value rational decision-making by individual students on the basis of their own values. It is important to remember that the model is designed to help students discover, examine, and clarify their own values as they relate to real-life decisions which students face, not to learn values espoused by the teacher or the literature. Finally, it should be noted that the final step in the model - social action - may or may not occur. That decision should be made by the student. In other words, you can lead a student to a decision, but you can't make him act.

The model is best explained through its application to a particular social issue and the use of particular literature to create an instructional plan. The issue of dealing with conflicts with other children was chosen for a primary class. It was chosen as an important social issue for children at this stage of development and as an issue where values are in conflict. Parents and teachers usually advocate certain solutions based on certain values ("Tell me - or the teacher - if he bothers you again"), while the culture of childhood often pressures children to act otherwise on the basis of a different set of values ("Don't tattle."). This issue was also chosen since group problem-solving serves as a base for an important aspect of citizenship in a democratic community.

Issue - dealing with conflicts with other children (brothers and sisters, friends, classmates).

1. Selection and Presentation of Materials. These materials could be social studies materials, newspaper articles, etc., but could

particularly be children's literature whose theme focuses on that issue, which would be appropriate for reading aloud to children or for independent reading by them, and whose themes offer different perspectives on the issue.

Possible books might include the following:

Lovable Lyle by Bernard Waber. When Lyle discovers he has an unknown enemy, he tries to solve his problem by being even nicer to everyone he encounters. His value seems to be that good overcomes evil.

Best Friends for Frances by Russell Hoban. When Frances is rejected by boy playmates because she is a girl, she turns the tables on one of them by rejecting him from a pleasant activity because he is a boy. She seems to feel that a dose of one's own medicine will cure evil.

Sunday Morning by Judith Viorst. Two boys wake up early on a Sunday morning and try to play quietly while their parents sleep in. They settle their problems by trade-offs and compromises.

Blackboard Bear by Martha Alexander. A little boy rejected by older playmates gains revenge vicariously through the creation of an imaginary bear. His revenge has an "eye for an eye" focus.

Benjamin and Tulip by Rosemary Wells. A girl expresses her dislike for a boy by fighting with him (They actually never solve their problem on their own.). This girl seems to hold the value that "might is right."

2. Analysis. This step might have to be done for each book. A set of questions for one of the books might be;

   What was Frances' problem?
   How did it happen?
   What did she try to do about it?
   Why do you think she did it?
   How well did it work?

3. Clarification. Students could agree or disagree with values statements and discuss their reasons.

e.g. Smaller kids have to go along with big kids.

If you're made fun of at school, you should tell the teacher.

Students could engage in improvisational drama of a scene from one of the stories or of a similar situation. In such situations, students act not only like the characters but also like themselves. Follow-up discussion can often clarify why students acted as they did in the drama and what personal values those actions reflect. Students could write a story on the theme. By doing so, their own values may be reflected in their story.

4. Classification and Comparison. Students could engage in a discussion centered around the following types of questions:

Which of the characters that we've read about are you most like? Why?
Which characters are like each other in the ways they act? Why?

or

What are the different problems we've seen?
What are the different reasons for the problems?
What are the different solutions for the problems?

Additions could be made to such a list from personal experience and from other sources, such as TV, other literature, parental or teacher advice, and so on. Students could also try to devise new solutions.

5. Reflection. Students could discuss or write the implications of a possible decision. For example,

Do you think that solution will work very well?
What would have happened if you had used it recently? (if you had behaved like Frances recently?)
How would you have felt afterward?
What would your friends think of you?
What if the person who shares the problem doesn't like your solution?
Should a whole class (or family or group of friends) agree to try one solution?

6. Application. Students may make no personal decisions about their real-life problem of getting along with others.

Students may make decisions and try to apply it to their personal lives. Any monitoring or follow-up of behavior and thinking could be personal on the part of each individual student or more public, perhaps as part of the class' continuing investigation of the issue.

Once again, it must be noted that this instructional model is meant to be used flexibly. Thus, the various activities listed in this example are presented as possibilities generated during a planning stage of instruction. What is actually done with a class of students will depend upon many factors - time constraints, literature resources, size of class or group, the social issues faced by a particular group of students on a daily basis, and, of course, what actually happens during the instruction. For instance, if the analysis of literature by the group quickly becomes reflection, the teacher should probably follow that lead by the students, waiting to see if it will even be necessary to deal explicitly with the clarification and classification stages later.

Other social issues and literature appropriate to different interests and age levels can be dealt with in a similar way through this instructional model. Many social studies curriculum guides list social issues appropriate for various grade levels. Children's literature arranged by personal and social themes can be found in Virginia Reid (Ed.) Reading Ladders for Human Relations, 5th edition (1972).

Using individual copies of children's literature with a group also calls for changes in instructional procedures different from those used

with multiple copies of readers. Books could be read aloud to a group by the teacher or by individual students. Copies of books can be passed from student to student in a small group for independent reading until all have read the same set of books. Individual students can read different books and then explain them to other students in the group.

Summary

Using literature for values clarification in social studies can accomplish several ends. It should provide an open-ended device for looking at social controversy, allow students to deal with literature on a personal and human level, integrate various school disciplines or subject matters, and aid the development of students' comprehension of the literature they read. Most importantly, however, it should help students grow as persons, by helping them find out who they are, who their social community is, and how they fit into it.

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